

AUTHORS' PREFACE

In the summer of 1866, an order from the Office of the Chief of Engineers established the Philadelphia District. But a true accounting of engineer activities in the District must reach back nearly a century beyond, to the Corps' founding in 1775.

Since then the stories of the Corps and of the Delaware Valley itself have been freshets feeding the same swift-running stream of American History, sometimes flowing smoothly, sometimes through dangerous rapids. This volume will attempt to trace that journey, to outline a story of determination and ingenuity, of an unending battle to protect a region and a nation from the ravages of war and of nature unchecked, and to facilitate the expansion of commerce and prosperity in what has become (partly through that Corps' efforts) the great Northeastern Megalopolis.

Written history is an attempt to derive pattern and meaning from the accumulated data of the past. To recapture any of the flavor of a period, one must balance the treatment of action and actor—while the Corps' achievements in the District encompass proud feats of ingenuity (the root word of engineer) and of plain engineering know-how, they are the works of men, not of a monolith. It is our insight into the lives of those men which lends true zest to any worthwhile history. This mixture our historians have attempted to portray. If we have succeeded it was the right recipe. If not, let your own wit provide the seasoning and time itself prove the proper judge.

Frank E. Snyder
Brian H. Guss